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Letter to Jennie Guiney, 1861 July 31

Patrick Guiney

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4 whether you may go. There are only two places
in the world to which I turn with the eye
of affection - where you are - no matter where
it is - and my native home. But then not in
a personal point of view, but as matter of interest
to us, I think the step may be a good one. The West
cannot be worse than the East for one of my age,
race and creed. I think well of it dear, on the
whole. If you go out there perhaps two months
will be the extent of our separation. But
Jennie where will you get the money to go with?
I will not be able to send any for several
weeks yet, perhaps not for one month to come!

~~Capt. H~~ Capt Fitzgerald says he will send his
family out to St. Pauls, if I go out there, and start
business when he leaves the army.

Captains Plunkett and Gallagher have both
resigned and want to go home, but the Col. is
persecuting them and detaining them here to
have them ^{tried} by a ~~court~~ martial for some imagi-
-nary offence. It is mere revenge, on his part although
they are not blameless. Unless we are attacked here,
there will be no fighting until Sept. If I had more
room and time I would talk with you more.
I run papers. I must close. No, I guess I will
go and raise another sheet of paper -

Arlington Heights near Washington
D. C. July 31st 1861

My dear Jennie:

Yesterday your letter of the twenty
sixth inst. came to our camp, but it did not arrive
it until late last night, having been down in the
forest with my company throwing up some defen-
-ces about three miles from here. Of course I was
delighted when I saw your hand writing upon
the envelope, but on reading it I was taken
somewhat by surprise at the expression of your
desire that I should return home. It did seem
to me that your sentiment in this particular
was more impassioned than well-considered; but,
on reflection, I have become suspicious that you
are right. Perhaps the letter which I sent to you
encouraged the idea of my return home. I do
not now remember one word of what I then said,
as everything here is done under some degree of
excitement, and in a hurry. My illness, too, has
had something to do with your desire to have
me at home. I know it has. But that has passed.
I am well now. What was only the usual process
of becoming acclimated in Virginia. I never felt better

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~~Letter~~ in my life (in health) than I do at the present time.
So, dear, I pray you give ^{me} ~~no~~ entertainment to any fears
for my general health.

I wish to say to you, Jennie, that
although I do not for a moment think of going
home now, yet that my presence here is conditional
and circumstantial and not by any means a fixed
thing. For instance, if the officers of this regiment should
continue to be treated like the prisoners in a chain-gang
by the colonel - if oaths and insults are to be the
standard of ^{the} official intercourse with his officers - if
ignorance and the ugliest arrogance are to be
flourished in the faces of those who are sensitive
~~for~~ enough to feel - if these things continue - I say
I will resign my commission. Of course, ~~he~~ he never
troubles me, neither does he Fitzgibbon. Yet, ~~you know~~
how painful it is to be obliged to associate with,
~~me~~ and mind you, to pay honors to, one like Colonel
Mass who has grown worse with the progress of his
days. Then the Lieut Colonel is an ex-Boston-Blice-
man and no more of a genial companion, I assure
you. Then there are several unprincipled fellows here
who are sort of pimps for Cass and Russell, and
in fact everything here is calculated, and to some
extent, designed, to embitter our days in camp. Were
it not for two or three considerations, to me this state
of things would be unbearable. One reason, I need not

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commit to paper, you, perhaps, will readily imagine
it. We talked of it together - then, the cause in which
we are enlisted is truly a good and grand one -
one that will entitle those who labor in the achievement
of its success, to ^{the} gratitude and remembrance of the pres-
ent, as well as of unborn generations - One that of itself
compensates by its sublimity and goodness for all
which may be sacrificed in its defence. Then again
there is the friendship of many officers ~~here~~ which
serves to modify the ~~severities~~ hardships of the
hour. These considerations, I say, delay and may continue
to postpone my return home. But the thought occurs
to me, what do these reasons amount to when opposed
by the wishes and welfare of my wife whom at the
taper-lit and sacred altar I vowed to love, cherish,
and protect? They amount to ~~the~~ little, Jennie. Yet, dear,
this is what I would impress upon you - that these
very ends - your ultimate wishes and welfare will
be best promoted by my retention of my commission
for some time yet. When, it is true, there is the danger
of losing life in this contest. But that is one of the
hazards of the times, and I feel that fate will not
do her worst upon me.

About going to your Brother John's. I would
say that I have no choice as to the locality in which
you may put yourself - wherever you are there is my
home. My heart is entirely free from all bias as to